

Message Text

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PAGE 01 COTONO 01404 261413Z

ACTION AF-10

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-----070794 262241Z /64

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FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0016

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE COTONOU 1404

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, PDIP, DM

SUBJ: TRAVEL ADVISORY: BENINESE MEASURES TO IMPROVE TREATMENT
OF TOURISTS

REF: A. STATE 197266 B. COTONOU 1360, C. COTONOU 1400

1. AS INDICATED IN REF B, EVEN PRIOR TO REPORT OF DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN AMB BOYA AND ACTING ASST SECRETARY HARROP RECEIVED IN COTONOU, BENINESE GOVERNMENT ON OWN INITIATIVE BEGAN TACKLING TWIN PROBLEMS OF REDUCING NUMBER OF ARRESTS AND OF SPEEDING PROCESSING OF THOSE ARRESTED. WE HAVE NOT SEEN ROGER PAQUI, DIR OF PROTOCOL AND CONSULAR AFFAIRS, TO LEARN WHAT TRANSPIRED AT MEETING HE WAS TO HOLD PER REF B.

2. ON AUG 25 CONSUL HAD CHANCE MEETING WITH FORMIN EMPLOYEE (UNABLE PROVIDE NAME) IN TOWN. HE SAID THAT BOYA'S REPORT OF HIS CONVERSATION WITH HARROP CITED REF A RECEIVED AT FORMIN AND PROMPTED IMMEDIATE FURTHER ACTION. EARLIER THAT DAY MEETING HELD AT FORMIN WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF INTERIOR MINISTRY AND MIN OF COMMERCE AND TOURISM PRESENT. SENIOR INTERIOR MIN OFFICIAL WAS FIRGEN ROGER AHOYO. SOURCE WAS ALSO PRESENT AND SAID THAT ALL PARTICIPANTS AGREED THAT COMPLAINTS MADE BY HARROP AS WELL AS BY OTHER DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS IN COTONOU WERE JUSTIFIED AND REMEDIAL ACTION MUST BE TAKEN.

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3. COMMERCE AND TOURISM REPS COMPLAINED THAT ARRESTS AND OTHER ARBITRARY ACTIONS SUCH AS CITED REF C HAVE BROUGHT TOURISM TO STANDSTILL AND THAT HEALTHY TOURIST INDUSTRY NEEDED FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES. THEY CLAIMED THAT PREVIOUSLY TOGO WAS NOT POPULAR WITH TOURISTS WHEREAS BENIN WAS, BUT SITUATION NOW REVERSED. FURTHERMORE, CHINESE NOW BUILDING BIG INTERNATIONAL CLASS HOTEL WHICH, AS THINGS NOW STAND, WILL

HAVE NO USEFUL PURPOSE.

4. SOURCE SAID THAT GROUP WILL CONTINUE TO MEET, AND IN TEN DAYS SUBMIT A LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND TO COUNCIL OF MINISTERS. WHILE RECOMMENDATIONS PRIMARILY AIMED AT FOSTERING TOURISM, THEY WILL INCLUDE NECESSITY OF STOPPING ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND BETTER HANDLING OF THOSE ARRESTED FOR CAUSE. AHOYO, INT MIN AZONHIHO'S RIGHT-HAND MAN, CONCURRED WITH THIS WHOLEHEARTEDLY.

5. WE ARE ENCOURAGED THAT SENIOR BENINESE OFFICIALS THEMSELVES ARE BEGINNING TO PERCEIVE THE PROBLEMS AND ARE TRYING TO RESOLVE THEM. CREAGER

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